



## **New Start-up OGWA Pumps It Up**

Utah is one of the nation's outdoor playgrounds, and is a vibrant center for the development of outdoor recreation gear. Outdoor recreation products represent an "export" that helps the state's economy grow.

In September 2008, a start-up company called Pressure Products, LLC won the first Concept to Company innovation contest, held in Ogden, UT. The contest had the goal of identifying new outdoor recreation product breakthroughs, to keep Utah in the forefront of this diverse market.

The contest's winning product – called a Pressure Pak – improves on flexible hydration packs currently on the market. A panel of outdoor recreation industry experts judged the Pressure Pak as the most innovative product with the highest market potential of the more than 120 entries in the Ogden contest, which was sponsored by Grow Utah Ventures, Zions Bank, and USTAR. Thanks to some support services from USTAR, the company – which is re-branding its technology as OGWA - has in its sights some very high potential markets.

"The origins of hydration packs you see on the market came from the IV bags EMTs use in ambulances," Toby Hazelbaker, Pressure Products business development lead, said. "My partner, Luke Reichert, was a nurse at Primary Children's Hospital, and he took things one step further. He took a rapid infuser, also used by EMTs, and wrapped it around his hydration pack to create a pressurized system."



"It's a simple idea. We have done what the medical industry did decades ago. We just connected the dots for the outdoor recreation world."

Winning accolades from Concept to Company's expert panelists was just the start.

“We are ‘garage’ inventors, engineers and R&D types. We were at that point where we needed more funding to expand the company,” Hazelbaker said.

Getting OGWA into the position to secure funding was the initial focus of help from USTAR, Hazelbaker said, and the nature of the company’s engagement with USTAR has been consultative. Since OGWA is based in the Salt Lake City area, Salt Lake/Tooele Regional Technology Outreach Director Suzanne Winters and USTAR analyst Ryan Angus provided significant assistance to the company.

One of the first steps was introducing the OGWA team to USTAR’s outdoor products industry expert, Curt Roberts, who is director of the Northern Utah Technology Outreach Center at Weber State University. Hazelbaker credits Roberts with providing the expertise to help Pressure Products develop an initial business plan. Angus took it from there.

“Our USTAR contact in Salt Lake, Ryan Angus, has a background in finance,” Hazelbaker said. “Ryan put together a very in-depth set of financial spreadsheets, and he helped us craft the final version of a solid business plan.”

“In turn, Suzanne and Curt put us in contact with a number of investment groups, and with the Utah Fund of Funds. Ryan gave us some great coaching on our presentations.”

Angus provided editorial support in developing the funding pitches. “Our initial pitch was pretty light on marketing and light on financials, and Ryan changed things around to make it more appealing to investors,” Hazelbaker said.

Success and growth are on its way. Recently the company received significant early-stage funding from Utah entrepreneur and investor Alan Hall. “We are pleased to invest in this great new emerging company and to partner with other interested angel investors,” Hall said. “We commend USTAR for its proactive involvement in helping Pressure Products and other excellent start up companies.”

Coaching on securing funding was just one element of USTAR’s support. Winters also put OGWA in touch with another regional tech outreach director, Al Walker, who recently finished a tour with the Army in Baghdad. “Significant sales of hydration packs are made to the U.S. and other militaries,” Hazelbaker said. “With his Army background, Al advised on product specs that will make our packs particularly useful to soldiers.”

Getting up to speed on the military market is important, since the Federal Government has research dollars available to small business to develop products that meet the needs of specific agencies. Thanks to the USTAR connection, OGWA is working with Utah’s SBBR/STTR Assistance Center – based at Salt Lake Community College’s Larry Miller Innovation Campus - on identifying potential federal research grants with military applications.

“Without USTAR, we’d still be in our garage trying to figure out how to find funding. USTAR assessed where we were, gave us some new tools, and pointed us to the right persons. I don’t know how we could have found, let alone afford the kind of business acumen that USTAR provides,” Hazelbaker said. “That these services are paid for by my tax dollars makes me smile.”

For more information on Pressure Pak products, visit [www.neversuckagain.com](http://www.neversuckagain.com).

### **ABOUT USTAR**

The Utah Science Technology and Research initiative (USTAR) is a long-term, state-funded investment to strengthen Utah's "knowledge economy" and generate high-paying jobs. Funded in March 2006 by the State Legislature, USTAR is based on three program areas. The first area involves funding for strategic investments at the University of Utah and Utah State University to recruit world-class researchers. The second area is to build state-of-the-art interdisciplinary facilities at these institutions for the innovation teams. The third program area involves teams that work with companies and entrepreneurs across the State to promote science, innovation, and commercialization activities. For more information, go to [www.innovationutah.com](http://www.innovationutah.com).

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